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**Disability and Otherness in William Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage* (1915) and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925)**

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I dedicate this humble work to:

My dear parents;

My loving sister and brothers;

My best friend Samira;

My friends and classmates Dalila, Zahia, Omar and Samir, with whom I shared memorable moments and sweet memories during the two last years of studies at UMMTO;

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## Abstract

The present dissertation is a comparative study of William Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage* (1915) and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). In fact, I have shed light on the literary representation of disability in these two narratives by putting emphasis on affinities and differences that exist between them in relation to the theme of disability. To cover this study, I have principally relied on Davis Mitchell and Sharon Synder's theory of *Narrative Prosthesis* which I have reinforced with two relevant chapters from *Disability Studies Reader* consisting of Tom Shakespeare's "The Social Model of Disability," and Lerita C. Brown's "Stigma: An Enigma Demystified." In the light of these three selected works, I have tried to reflect the authors' claims about the "otherization" of the disabled and their misrepresentation in literature. Indeed, in the first chapter, I borrowed the notion of "characterization" from *Narrative Prosthesis* in order to demonstrate the employment of disability in narrative art as a device of characterization which reflects the "otherness" of disabled characters. In addition, I have made reference to Shakespeare's "The Social Model of Disability" which treats the same issue of "otherness" and the social marginalization of the disabled. In the second chapter, I have put emphasis on the differences between the two texts relying on Mitchell and Synder's idea of "hierarchy," that exists within disability and marks its varieties including mental and physical impairments, and Brown's notion of "cultural stigma" as an attribute of disability. Finally, drawing on Mitchell and Synder's notion of "cultural interrogation," the third chapter has put emphasis on the impact of cultural values on the class status and the position of disabled people in society.

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*Nature caused us all to be born equal; if fate is pleased to disturb this plan of the general law, it is our responsibility to correct its caprice, and to repair by our attention the usurpations of the stronger.*

Maurice Blanchot

### **Comment**

Maurice Blanchot asserts that human beings are all simple creatures whom God have created equally no matter what their race, ethnicity and gender may be. However, social norms have been created by man in order to distinguish between different categories of people and divide society into many structures which are organized in a hierarchical order. This hierarchy then indicates that a given category of people is better, powerful and more privileged than another one. Therefore, Blanchot calls for the denial or the suppression of this rule that spreads discrimination and social inequality.

## **I. Introduction**

Among all the oppressed populations and minorities in the world which have historically been subject to racial, gender, social and other forms of discrimination, disability constitutes a social category with an invalid identity. In fact, while everybody strives for perfection and competes to conform to the world of norms, disabled individuals are likely to be invisible and marginalized. Their physical deformities and intellectual impairments set them in the rank of “otherness” which encompasses all the disadvantaged and disfranchised groups of people in society. Moreover, in every culture, people with disabilities are perceived as “Other”, and they are thought of as inferior and subordinate because of their corporeal differences which imply different stereotypes and misconceptions that in turn have negatively influenced and distorted the image of these disabled persons. Their disability is considered as a “deviation” from the norm; it determines the collective abnormal and inferior identity of the disabled. As far as culture is concerned, literature is a shortcut to the historically accumulated facts and constructs, and a mirror to culture that reflects the lifestyle of societies including their beliefs and attitudes towards a given phenomenon such as disability.

In this paper, I intend to analyze two literary works in order to examine the issue of disability in relation to culture and society. In more precise words, the present work is a comparative study of two modernist masterpieces consisting of *Of Human Bondage* (1915) and *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) respectively by William Somerset Maugham and Virginia Woolf. As a matter of fact, these two selected novels can be both compared and contrasted in relation to the representation of disability.

### **1. Review of the literature**

The two works have been a center of interest for many years and for many scholars who approached them from different perspectives. In fact, a large number of critical analyses

was produced or carried out on both of them due to the varied subject matters and recurrent social issues that the two authors tackle in their writings such as religion, love, family, class and other concerns that would affect and interest the different structures of society. For instance, Xiaohong Ji examines the theme of religion in *Of Human Bondage*. He argues that religion stands for a bondage and a heavy burden in the protagonist's life since it bonds him to several moral instructions and duties that require much time and devotion. Xiaohong Ji writes: "In the process of Philip's maturity, he has also suffered from the degrading bondage of Christianity; He undergoes the emotional experiences of the normal child and adolescent under strong pressure."<sup>1</sup> In other words, Philip feels oppressed by those religious instructions and believes that God and the power of religion fail his expectations and have no longer an effect on him. Thus, he decides to give up his faith and commitment and get free from this bondage of dogma.

Similarly, in their analysis of *Mrs. Dalloway*, Elyse Graham and Pericles Lewis stress the theme of religion to reflect the confusion of the British society after the WW1 in relation to this concern, and the split of its population into those who lost faith in God and the institution of religion such as Clarissa Dalloway and those who still believe in resurrection and find in religion a refuge and a consolation to their suffering and trauma like Septimus Warren Smith. The two authors state:

In Clarissa, we learn early on, the enchantments of traditional religion find no hold: "not for a moment did she believe in God". Yet her alter ego, Septimus, the traumatized veteran who makes plans to found a new religion, lives in a storm of enchantment. In his illness, Septimus soars up in sudden epiphanies, which Woolf undercuts by juxtaposing them with the drab materials of ordinary life: "Men must not cut down trees. There is a God."<sup>2</sup>

It follows from this statement that the two main characters of *Mrs. Dalloway* incarnate two opposed social attitudes towards religion. Therefore, to echo the two authors, "the novel plays out a struggle between the efforts of the two protagonists to satisfy that need by finding an acceptable theory of resurrection."<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, love is another underlying theme in both narratives. Amine Ettehad and Roohllah Reesi Sistani study *Of Human Bondage* from a psychoanalytic perspective with reference to Freud's *interpretations* to shed light on the nature of love that exists in the novel. They claim that Philip's love for Mildred is another bondage that causes a great deal of suffering to him because of Mildred's apathy and indifference toward him. Therefore, they describe him as a "slave to his desire"<sup>4</sup> and a "masochistic person who contributes to hurting his own self."<sup>5</sup> In other words, Philip is devoted to Mildred, but she does not show the same love and attention for him; he strives to satisfy her materialistic desires only to remain by his side. Thus, Ettehad and Sistani consider him as an emotional slave because of his dependence on Mildred. They note: "The subject who depends on another for recognition and satisfaction of his own desire turns to be in constant need of the presence of the other."<sup>6</sup> Likewise, love is central to *Mrs. Dalloway*. Mieke Schuler examines the relationship between Clarissa and Peter, who love each other very much but end up engaged to other persons because of Clarissa's refusal for Peter. In fact, Schuler assumes that Clarissa's refusal is "an act of self-preservation because she believes that love and religion would destroy that, whatever it was, the privacy of the soul."<sup>7</sup> Therefore, she chose privacy over love. He adds: her "choice of Richard was partly motivated by desire for social prestige and materialistic security."<sup>8</sup> In this way, Schuler captures the theme of love in *Mrs. Dalloway* assuming that Woolf's description is based on subjective interpretation and perception that justify Clarissa's reaction to Peter.

Last but not least, other critics also chose to study both novels from a psychoanalytic angle in order to explore the inner side of the characters and their attitudes which must be influenced by external factors. For instance, in his article entitled "Emptiness of Life in *Maugham's Of Human Bondage*," Sandeep K. Thorat attributes the shift in human morals and the erosion of values to the modern setting which is, in turn, influenced by industrialization. He writes:

the emergence of Information Technology has presently made human being a mechanic one in which life seems to be insignificant. Everyone is busy in seeking physical happiness and life is going on without knowing its real meaning.<sup>9</sup>

In this excerpt, Thorat argues that life loses its meaning and modern man becomes empty and immoral in the sense that his ultimate goal in life is to satisfy his animalistic desires including sex. Thus, most of the characters in *Of Human Bondage* have become “Philanderers”<sup>10</sup> in a constant quest for love and sexual amusement.

From the same perspective, Jin Wang and Xiaoyu Xie claim that the emptiness of life and the moral suffering of the characters in *Mrs. Dalloway*, mainly Clarissa and Septimus, are due to the fact that they could not cope with WW1 and its trauma. They write:

[...] the novel *Mrs. Dalloway* not only guides us to a better understanding of pervasive impacts of traumatic experiences, but also serves a reflection of the traumatic narratives of different protagonists.<sup>11</sup>

This is to say that the novel reflects the impact of the war on the characters that are depicted as struggling to accommodate to life and regain their sense of sociability and sanity after this traumatic event.

From the above Review of the Literature, it obviously appears that the two works have intrigued many critics who have approached them from different perspectives and have tackled different themes which are present and prominent in both narratives. However, it seems that these critics have limited their focus and analyses to some themes or aspects including religion, love, and human psyche. These themes are elaborated in both novels; this common ground reinforces the possibility of studying the two novels together.. Therefore, this paper will be concerned with the issue of disability and the way it is depicted and represented in the two selected works.

## **Issue and Working Hypothesis**

My aim in this dissertation is to compare and contrast Maugham’s *Of Human Bondage* and Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* with reference to the issue of disability. To my best knowledge,

few comparative analyses- if not any- between these works have been carried out most notably in relation to this topic in spite of the range of similarities and differences that they both display in the context of disability representation. Thus, I will attempt to shed light on every aspect that reflects both the convergence and the divergence between these narratives. My hypothesis suggests that the two protagonists of *Of Human Bondage* and *Mrs. Dalloway* are represented from the same vein of “otherness” because of disability, but their experiences or fates differ or vary according to the way in which the two authors depict them.

In the first place, I intend to compare the two works in order to explore the common characteristics between them in terms of literary representation of disability. I will attempt to explore the representation of the two main characters from the same lens of “otherness” and “deviation” because of their physical and mental disabilities. Second, I aim to contrast the two narratives with putting emphasis on the different aspects between them and highlighting the varieties of disability with reference to the two protagonists who have two different impairments and react differently vis-à-vis their conditions. Finally, I will shed light on the way disability interacts with culture and class and try to demonstrate how those cultural beliefs and stereotypes about disabled individuals affect their position in society and determine their class status.

To deal with this issue, I will principally rely on David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder’s innovative theory of *Narrative Prosthesis*, which deeply examines and illustrates the otherness of disabled people in culture in general and in literary representations in particular. In addition to this frame theory, I will draw to two supporting chapters from *Disability Studies Reader* consisting of Tom Shakespeare’s “The Social Model of Disability,” and Lerita C. Brown’s “Stigma: An Enigma Demystified.” These two theoretical works will serve as an endorsement to the first theory.

In addition to an introduction, methods and materials, and a conclusion, this dissertation includes a discussion part which will be divided into three chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the similarities between the two novels in terms of disability and “otherness”. In its turn, the second chapter emphasizes the varieties of disability or the differences between the two physically and mentally disabled characters. As for the third or the final chapter, it highlights the “cultural interrogation” of disability which implies another important social dimension which is class. This chapter will reflect the interaction of disability with culture and class, and the socio-economic marginalization of the two characters in particular and the disabled people in general.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Xiaohong Ji, “Bondages of the Protagonist Philip Carey in Maugham’s *Of Human Bondage* and His Long Pilgrimage toward Freedom”, in *4th International Conference on Education, Language, Art and Inter-cultural Communication* (Tiangin: Atlantis Press, 2017), 489.

<sup>2</sup> Elyse and Lewis Pericles, “Private Religion, Public Mourning, and Mrs. Dalloway,” *Modern Philosophy* 111, no.1 (2013): 91, accessed April 04, 2019, url: <https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/campuspress.yale.edu/dist/0/1707/files/2016/12/Private-Religion-292gnw7.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Amin Ettehadi and Roohollah Reesi Sistani, “Psychoanalytic Reading of Love and Desire in Somerset Maugham’s *Of Human Bondage*,” *Studies in English Language Teaching* 5, no. 1 (2017): 68, accessed April 05, 2019, url: <http://www.scholink.org/ojs/index.php/selt/article/view/803>.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, 66.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid, 61.

<sup>7</sup>Mieke Schuler, *Mrs. Dalloway in Love* (Munich: Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, 2005), 22.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> K. Thorat Sandeep, “EMPTINESS OF LIFE IN MAUGHAM’S OF HUMAN BONDAGE,” *Vidyabharati International Interdisciplinary Research Journal* 1, no. 1 (2012): 63, accessed April 07, 2019, url: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316715376\\_EMPTINESS\\_OF\\_LIFE\\_IN\\_MAUGHAM'S\\_OF\\_HUMAN\\_BONDAGE](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316715376_EMPTINESS_OF_LIFE_IN_MAUGHAM'S_OF_HUMAN_BONDAGE)

<sup>10</sup>Ibid, 65.

<sup>11</sup> Jin Wang and Xiaoyu Xie. "Traumatic Narrative in Virginia Woolf's Novel Mrs. Dalloway," *English Language and Literature Studies* 7, no. 1 (2017): 22 accessed April 11, 2019, url: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312677889 Traumatic Narrative in Virginia Woolf's Novel Mrs Dalloway](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312677889_Traumatic_Narrative_in_Virginia_Woolf's_Novel_Mrs_Dalloway).

### **III. Methods and Materials**

#### **1. Methods**

##### **Theoretical framework**

This dissertation examines the issue of disability as represented in Maugham's *Of Human Bondage* and Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. To cover this study, I have relied on Mitchell and Synder's theory of *Narrative prosthesis* with putting emphasis on its notions of: *characterization*, mental and physical varieties and *cultural interrogation*. In addition, I have selected two relevant chapters from Lennards' *Disability Studies Reader* which are Shakespeare's "The Social Model of Disability" and Brown's "Stigma: An Enigma Demystified" in order to support and reinforce the frame theory. These works have grounded the way to my research and provided it with a theoretical framework on which my analysis leans.

##### **a. Narrative Prosthesis**

Coined by its authors David Mitchell and Sharon Synder, "Narrative Prosthesis" "refers to the pervasiveness of disability as a device of characterization in narrative art."<sup>12</sup> Despite the different underlying points that this book discusses in relation to disability, its major and primary concern is "to identify moments when disability becomes a primary preoccupation in narrative art,"<sup>13</sup> in order to reflect and illustrate the cultural misrepresentation of the disabled body throughout different periods. In fact, Mitchell and Synder claim that the implication of disability in literary and historical texts is based on cultural beliefs that devalue the status of the disabled people and distort their collective image. They write: "Most basic identification of character through disability is the way in which physical and mental differences have been narrated as alien to the normal course of human affairs."<sup>14</sup> This demonstrates that most disabled characters in literary narratives are represented as aliens or Other because of their corporeal differences that do not allow them to

conform and fit to the norm. In fact, this claim came after their analysis of different literary works of different periods that use disability as a device of characterization. Moreover, from this analysis, they deduced that the negative depiction of disability in narrative art influences the real experiences of disabled individuals through spreading stereotypes and disfavored beliefs about them. They note:

While literature often relies on disability's transgressive potential, disabled people have been sequestered, excluded, exploited and obliterated on the very basis of which their literary representation so often rests.<sup>15</sup>

To reformulate, this excerpt shows that literary representations often contribute to the debasement of disabled people through portraying them as oppressed, inferior and merely deviants.

In addition to the idea of disability as a device of characterization and a mark of otherness, Mitchell and Synder suggest that there is a hierarchical difference within disability. In fact, one aspect of this hierarchy appears in the differences between disabled individuals or their different experiences in relation to their impairments. They state:

There have also been hierarchies within our own communities where some disabilities are viewed as less assimilable than others. For instance, individuals with physical disabilities have historically disassociated themselves from those who have intellectual disabilities.<sup>16</sup>

This above citation highlights two varieties of disability consisting in 'physical' and 'intellectual' impairments. In fact, it seems that the different nature of these impairments mark the divergence between the experiences of physically and mentally disabled individuals. In other words, though disability is generally represented from the same lens of otherness, the experiences of disabled people differ in one way or another according to the nature of their impairments and the extent to which these impairments affect them and influence their lives.

Last but not at least, Narrative Prosthesis highlights the cultural interrogation of disability in literary representations. In fact, in their analysis of different narratives that tackle

this theme, Mitchell and Synder examine the implication of culture and its role in the meaning-making of disability. Indeed, they assume that the depiction of people with disabilities as aliens and deviants reflects the cultural perception of this phenomenon and the prejudices that stem from the core of society and culture. In this regard, they note: “the interpretation of representations of disability strikes at the very core of cultural definitions and values.”<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, as it is depicted in most disability writings, this culturally-based representation of disabled people determines their collective identity as Other and impact on their integration in society. In other words, disabled people tend to occupy a subordinate and a low position among their fellow citizens because of the cultural discriminatory beliefs about them.

#### **b. The Social Model of Disability**

“The Social Model of Disability” was first introduced by Mike Oliver in 1983<sup>18</sup> as a reaction to the medical model which implies that people are disabled by their impairments. The medical model defines disability as a given impairment in the body which needs a medical intervention to fix it or heal it. In fact, the Social Model contends that disability is socially constructed through different barriers and constraints that prevent the disabled body from full participation in society. Moreover, the Social Model has known modifications by the English sociologist Tom Shakespeare who introduced his version of “The Social Model of Disability” in a chapter under the same title in *Disability Studies Reader*. Shakespeare distinguishes two sides of this theory which are: weaknesses and strengths. In the strong version, he agrees that disability is somehow a social phenomenon which originates from the discriminatory views and attitudes of the non-disabled toward their disabled fellows. He notes: “it is the interaction of individuals bodies and social environment which produces disability.”<sup>19</sup> This model also distinguishes between ‘impairment’ and ‘disability’; “the former is individual and private, and the latter is structural and public.”<sup>20</sup> In short, “The Social

Model of Disability” highlights the social barriers that hinder the activity and the participation of individuals with disabilities in their communities.

### **c. Stigma: An Enigmatic Demystified**

“Stigma: An Enigma Demystified” is the eleventh chapter in Lennard’s *Disability Studies Reader* introduced by Lerita M. Coleman Brown. As a social scientist and a professor of psychology, Brown examines the issue of stigma in its social and cultural contexts. She argues that stigma which denotes inferiority and cultural devaluation is a result of social categorization and comparison between different social groups on the basis of different criteria including race, gender, ethnicity, and body features, etc. This process of comparison results in the formation of two opposed social groups: superior and inferior. The latter involves the oppressed minorities including blacks, Jews, women, poor, and disabled. These groups then experience stigma and cultural devaluation. Brown claims that the stigmatization and the oppression of these categories results from the desire of the other privileged and superior categories to exercise power and hegemony in society. She writes:

It seems that the paradoxical societal norms that establish a subordinate and dependent position for stigmatized people while ostracizing them for it may stem from the need of nonstigmatized people to maintain a sense of superiority.<sup>21</sup>

It seems from this statement that the non-stigmatized individuals are in need of the presence of the stigmatized ones such as disabled in order to feel safe and superior. At the end, Brown suggests that the oppressed people can overcome their sentiment of stigma if they start to accept their physical and cultural differences.

## **2. Materials**

### **a. Summary of Maugham’s *Of Human Bondage* (1915)**

*Of Human Bondage*<sup>22</sup> is a modernist masterpiece by the English writer Maugham first published in 1915 and soon achieved a considerable success and fame among the British readers because of the interesting and various themes that it treats such as love, friendship, cheating, discrimination, hardships etc. In fact, the book centers upon the personal development of the protagonist Philip Carey and highlights his different experiences in his life throughout different periods which are related to family relationships, education, friendship, love and above all disability. Indeed, Philip is born with a disability consisting of a physical deformity, and his whole life seems to be affected by this deformity. Furthermore, this disadvantaged condition puts him in situations where he feels denigrated and different from other people around him. As a consequence, Philip finds himself in a constant struggle against the social norms and the cultural constructs that frustrate him and hinder his psychological growth and comfort. Despite all the social barriers that Philip has been compelled to go through because of his disability, he ends up happy and more confident as he learned to overcome his feeling of stigma and embrace his difference.

#### **b. Summary of Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925)**

Published in 1925, Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*<sup>23</sup> is deemed as one of the best and significant literary works of the modernist era and even after. In fact, social and literary critics underscore the historical importance and the significance of this novel that dwell in the fact that it epitomizes the social life in Post-War Britain and embodies the cultural values and attitudes toward different issues such as love, war, political and religious ideals, class and social hierarchy. This novel describes the social and individual lives of the two protagonists namely Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith, who struggle to give a meaning to their existence. As far as Septimus is concerned, he is introduced as a war veteran and an educated individual who loses any interest in life after he was affected by a mental disorder as a result of his participation in WWI. Moreover, this disability marks a dramatic shift in his life

and impacts on his position and status in society, as he became a passive and an abnormal individual. Indeed, after this change, Septimus is described as an eccentric individual who experiences estrangement and disintegration. The author of the novel suggests that Septimus' disability makes him a deviant and an outsider, and thus the best solution to escape this situation is to commit suicide.

## **Endnotes**

<sup>12</sup> David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* (The University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor, 2003), 9.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid, 4.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid, 52.

<sup>18</sup> Tom Shakespeare, "The Social Model of Disability," in *Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge, 2013), 215.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid, 218.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 216.

<sup>21</sup> Lerita M. Coleman Brown, "Stigma: An Enigma Demystified," in *Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge, 2013), 154.

<sup>22</sup>William Somerset Maugham, *Of Human Bondage* (London: Penguin Books, 1992).

<sup>23</sup>Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 1996).

### III. Results and Discussion

From my close reading of Maugham's *Of Human Bondage* and Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, I deduced that both novels interrogate the cultural conception of the issue of disability and project its literary representation in the context of "otherness" and "deviance". In fact, the portrayal of disability or disabled characters in these narratives is based on social constructs and related to cultural beliefs or stereotypes that are not in the favor of disabled people. Indeed, this stereotype-based representation implies the social exclusion of those persons affected with physical or cognitive impairments and considers them as "Other" or "deviants" who are not likely to fit and integrate in community because of their corporeal differences. All in all, the two authors depict disability from a cultural lens that reflects the discriminatory attitudes toward disabled people which, in turn, deprive them from full participation and inclusion in social life and impact their socio-economic status or position.

My study of these two books is carried out after a long contemplation and consideration of the selected theories that I have relied on in this research paper, and the results of my analysis concern three main points. The first is related to the idea of disability as an instrument of characterization in *Of Human Bondage* and *Mrs. Dalloway*. In fact, through the two main characters namely Philip Carey and Septimus Warren Smith, the two authors shed light on the experiences of the disabled people as a socially oppressed group. Their literary representations display common stereotypes associated with disability such as inferiority, passivity, discrimination and above all social marginalization and exclusion. Philip and Septimus share the same status of "Other" and "deviant" because of their respective physical and mental disabilities. They are both subject to discrimination and cultural stigmatization.

However, the second point is related to the fact that disability and reactions to it vary from one individual to another. In fact, despite the common stereotypes and attitudes that put

both Philip and Septimus in the same vein of “otherness”, their experiences in relation to disability depend on whether this latter is mental or physical. Indeed, the nature and the severity of their impairments mark the difference and impact on the subjective experiences of both characters. Moreover, Philip, as portrayed by Maugham, continuously defies the social constraints and barriers that seem to oppress him and impact his personal development and conduct. He eventually succeeds to overcome his disablement and accept his physical difference. By contrast, Septimus is overwhelmed by his hallucinations and passivity. His tragic fate is related to his inability to adjust to his mental disability and overcome his feeling of stigma and estrangement.

As another prominent idea that surfaces in both novels, culture and class are two social dimensions that interact with disability. Indeed, the social class of disabled individuals is influenced by their disabilities and the cultural assumptions hold on them. The literary representations of Philip and Septimus’s experiences show that the marginalization and the otherization of individuals with physical and intellectual impairments in their communities affect their socio-economic status and submit them to a lower position in society. In short, the authors demonstrate that the status of disabled people is determined by both their physical limitations and their cultural devaluation that subdue them to economic hardships and prevent them from earning a decent living and establishing their well-being.

## **Chapter One: The Disabled as a Discriminated Group in *Of Human Bondage* and *Mrs. Dalloway***

This first chapter intends to explore the issue of disability and the marginalization or the alienation of the disabled in *Of Human Bondage* and *Mrs. Dalloway*. In fact, disability concern has historically appeared in many canonical works as a prominent theme and a device of characterization. Woolf's and Maugham's texts prove to be an outstanding and relevant model of illustration as far as disability is concerned, because both of them project this subject matter and demonstrate its function in literary discourses. Besides, they embody the literary and cultural representation of disability and display the different characteristics ascribed to the disabled people through characterization or respectively through the two main characters, namely Philip Carey and Septimus Warren Smith.

Indeed, like race, gender, class and sexual orientation, disability is a social category that has intrigued many authors and impelled them not only to employ it in their fiction but also to use it as a pillar upon which the whole story stands. In other words, this issue has occupied a significant place in literature for centuries, and it is considered as an outstanding element that shapes the narrative in terms of plot and characterization. In the light of *Narrative Prosthesis*, the theory I am going to rely on mainly in this chapter, Mitchell and Synder underscore the importance and the centrality of disability in narrative discourses. They note: "Our phrase narrative prosthesis is meant to indicate that disability has been used throughout history as a crutch upon which literary narratives lean for their representational power, disruptive potentiality, and analytical insight."<sup>1</sup>

In the same context, Barker and Murray write:

Disability is everywhere in literature, across all periods and genres, whether in medieval saint's narratives, or the sentimentality of the 19th-century novel, modernist obsessions with eugenics or contemporary preoccupations with mental health.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, the two quotes above shed light on the centrality of the issue of disability in many literary works produced in different periods and pertaining to different literary movements, but in this dissertation I am most specifically concerned with the two selected works. Thus, in the following paragraphs, I will try to explore how each of the two authors approach or represent the theme of disability, and the common characteristics between their representations of Philip Carey and Septimus Warren Smith in terms of disability.

In Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*, we are introduced to the main character Philip Carey, who is described as a physically disabled individual born with a deformity at the level of his foot called a 'club-foot'. At the age of five, Philip loses his mother and becomes an orphan of both parents since his father had died when he was still a fetus. Therefore, he is brought up by his paternal uncle and his wife at the vicarage. The novel then portrays the experience of Philip as a disabled character from his early childhood to his adulthood with putting emphasis on the hardships he is compelled to go through and the barriers he encounters in society because of his deformity.

The second novel *Mrs. Dalloway* also reflects the issue of disability through the second protagonist Septimus Warren Smith, who is a WWI veteran. As a matter of fact, Septimus becomes disabled after the war; the loss of his friend Evans and the cruelty of the war led him to go through a depression that would result later on in a Shell-Shock, or what is scientifically called as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Moreover, the narrator brings us back to Septimus' life before the war in order to shed light on the individual as well as the social change and the outcomes that disability might engender. In other words, after Septimus becomes disabled, his life has dramatically shifted; he henceforth undergoes a kind of social isolation and oppression that will determine his identity and fate as a disabled individual.

In *Narrative Prosthesis* theory, Mitchell and Snyder provide a historical study of disability through examining different literary works whose main characters are disabled, and they subsequently bring out the underlying characteristics shared between these works in terms of literary portrayal and representation of disability. They eventually deduce that most of the disabled characters in those works are portrayed from a cultural lens that considers individuals with corporeal differences as “deviant” and Others. They write:

Disability has undergone a dual negation—it has been attributed to all "deviant" biologies as a discrediting feature, while also serving as the material marker of inferiority itself. One might think of disability as the master trope of human disqualification.<sup>3</sup>

The above quotation illustrates the extent to which disability is culturally perceived as an undesirable characteristic that denotes inferiority and otherness.

As far as disability is concerned, Maugham and Woolf provide us with two typical characters that identify in this category of disabled people that is in turn associated with social oppression and discrimination. In *Of Human Bondage*, Philip Carey is introduced from the very beginning as a different baby who does not conform to the norm because he is born with a “club-foot”, a type of physical deformity. Of course, as a baby, he is not aware of his difference nor of the attitudes of other people toward him. However, the author foreshadows and anticipates the fate of Philip as a disabled person and the struggle which is waiting for him. He does this by describing the reaction of Mrs. Carey at the clinic when she learns that her baby has got a physical deformity which makes him different from the rest. Indeed, thinking that his whole life will be bound to his disability, Philip’s mother has been seized with torment and grief. Maugham reports:

[...] she passed her hand down his body till she came to his feet; she held the right foot in her hand and felt the five small toes; and then slowly passed her hand over the left one. She gave a sob. [...] she shook her head, unable to speak, and the tears rolled down her cheeks.<sup>4</sup>

This passage reflects the early attitudes of pity and sympathy toward Philip. Besides, his mother worries about him: “she sobbed now broken heartedly”<sup>5</sup> and asked: “what to happen to him, poor child?”<sup>6</sup> In other words, she is aware that her son’s life would not be easy and that he would be exposed to situations where his disability may be a sensitive and a serious matter. In this way, the author describes the feeling and the reaction of Philip’s mother as if his birth was a psychological burden or a misfortune. In an essay entitled “Children Born with Disabilities”, Ritchie et. al. assume that: “parents usually react with psychological stress, a feeling of loss or low self-esteem”<sup>7</sup> and that “the child is disappointing, and a social obstacle leading to shame and embarrassment”<sup>8</sup>. They add: “the birth of such a child usually follows five stages: denial, anger, bargaining and acceptance.”<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, the families of disabled children struggle to accept them because they are socially perceived as “outcasts” and incarnate a kind of cultural stigma.

Likewise, Woolf portrays the second protagonist of *Mrs. Dalloway* Septimus Warren Smith as an outsider after he gets mentally impaired or affected with a shell-shock and loses his sense of proportion. Like Philip’s mother who laments her son’s condition, Septimus’ Italian wife Lucrezia struggles to accept her husband’s changing behavior and eccentric character. In fact, she feels that her life is spoiled because of this change. Indeed, she loves Septimus; she left her home and family and came to live with him in London. However, now she wonders if it would have been better if she stayed in Italy, for she is unhappy and rather miserable. The author reports: “but for herself she had done nothing wrong; she had loved Septimus; she had been happy; she had had a beautiful home, and there her sisters lived still, making hats. Why should she suffer”<sup>10</sup>. Lucrezia’s attitude toward her husband’s condition seems to be confused; she loves him and wants to help him, but she also suffers and wishes that she was still in her home among her sisters in Milan instead of being tortured by her husband’s current state. Woolf adds: “Since she was so unhappy, for weeks and weeks now,

Rezia had given meanings to things that happened, almost felt sometimes that she must stop people in the street if they looked good just to say to them ‘ I am unhappy’ ”<sup>11</sup>.

Accordingly, Septimus is also depicted as a psychological burden to his wife; his disability bears a great deal of suffering to her and makes her feel miserable and unfortunate. Besides, Lucrezia tends to feel embarrassed by and even ashamed of Septimus’ hallucination and queer behavior especially when they are in public places. Woolf states: “ No; I can’t stand it any longer, she was saying , having left Septimus, who wasn’t Septimus any longer, to say hard cruel, wicked things, to talk to himself; to talk to a dead man”<sup>12</sup>. Indeed, Septimus hallucinates about his dead friend Evans and seems to imagine him and talk to his ghost. This frightens his wife and she is embarrassed when other people look at them in the public. A man was looking at them when they were in the public garden and she thinks: “He is talking, he was staring, this man must notice him. He was looking at them.”<sup>13</sup> In this context, Beauchamp et. al. claim:

The attitudes towards disabled individuals are as diverse as people are diverse. Some of those attitudes, however, can be grouped together: attitudes of fear, attitudes of revulsion, and attitudes of pity are just three of the more horrific ones. These attitudes have not only been displayed by people, they have also been imposed upon people—often disabled people.<sup>14</sup>

This quote shows that disabled persons inspire different feelings in non-disabled others such as fear, pity and repulsion. These attitudes are prejudices that become common because of their circulation in society.

As a matter of fact, Mrs. Carey and Lucrezia’s attitudes of pity, fear and stigma are not deliberate but imposed on them by society and culture. In others words, the attitudes of discrimination and exclusion toward the disabled individuals in society impact on the family relationships with, and attitudes toward, disabled members. As a consequence, Philip’s mother’s and Septimus’ wife’s worries and discomfort do not originate from vacuum or from

their free wills, but they are a result of imposed and internalized cultural beliefs and stereotypes about disability. In this regard, Denise Thomson and others argue:

Perceptions of people with disability greatly affect their inclusion in their communities and their capacity to achieve basic goals. Examples of negative attitudes towards people with disability include derogatory stereotypes, beliefs that people with disability have a lesser position in society or that they have a diminished capacity to contribute due to their impairment. Holding such attitudes leads people to maintain social distance from people with disability and exclude them from their social networks.<sup>15</sup>

This quotation illustrates the way society, or the privileged non-disabled people, exclude and marginalize their fellow citizens who display physical or mental limitations.

Moreover, the way Maugham and Woolf portray the attitudes of Mrs. Carey and Lucrezia toward the two disabled characters reveals that they both confirm and assert the social model of disability which holds that disability's outcomes do not only affect the concerned individuals with impairments but also their relatives who are likely to experience stigmatization. In this respect, Rene Momene points out:

Disability is seen by many people as a personal tragedy and so disabled people deserved to be pitied. PWDs [people with disabilities] are often viewed as tragic figures whom society should pity. According to them, the burden of disability is unending; life with a disabled person is a life of constant sorrow and agony and that the able-bodied stand under a continual obligation to help them. People with disabilities and their families are the most perfect objects of charity and their role is to inspire benevolence in others.<sup>16</sup>

This quote reflects the way in which the able-bodied members of society view the disabled ones as recipients of pity and compassion. They also stand for a burden to the members of their families because they are expected to take care of them and permanently watch over them. In short, they are in one way or another obliged to constantly give them help and provide them with security and welfare.

In addition, apart from the feelings of pity, fear and shame, Lucrezia seems to blame her husband for his disability, and she considers his emotional numbness as apathy and selfishness. She “was crying and he felt nothing.”<sup>17</sup> She thinks:

Such things happen to everyone. Everyone has friends who were killed in the war. Everyone gives up something when they marry. She had given up her home. She had come to live here, in this awful city. But Septimus let himself think about horrible things, as she could too, if she tried.<sup>18</sup>

This passage indicates that according to Lucrezia, Septimus is responsible for his disability and for the miserable situation they are found in. He is deliberately sunk in hallucinations and cannot give up overthinking about the dead man and his experience in the Great War. Thus, his health condition deteriorates, and his life gradually falls apart.

In Narrative Prosthesis theory, the two authors unfold the “negative imagery”<sup>19</sup> and the stereotypes that pervade many literary works with reference to disability. In fact, they argue that many authors tend to portray disability in a discriminatory way fraught with stereotypes and socially constructed beliefs about disabled people. Some of these stereotypes of discrimination obviously appear throughout the two selected narratives. Indeed, Philip and Septimus are portrayed as “deviants”, inferior, socially marginalized and oppressed by those who are assumed to be superior and conforming to the norm.

As Philip grows up, he becomes aware of his difference and exclusion from the rest of people around him because of their attitudes that show repulsion and discrimination toward him. School is practically the most pivotal episode in his life which causes him a great deal of humiliation and contributes in the shaping of his sensitive character. At school, he faces for the first time the reality of being a different and stigmatized child; he encounters many barriers and endures many scenes of oppression and physical as well as verbal violence by his classmates and teachers towards him only because he is disabled. For instance, when he and other school boys were playing “Pig in the Middle”<sup>20</sup> in the “school playground”<sup>21</sup>, Philip has been bullied and denigrated exclusively because of his limp and his inability to run as fast as they do. I cite the author:

Philip saw a boy running past and tried to catch him, but his limp gave him no chance; and the runners, taking their opportunity, made straight for the ground he covered. Then one of them had the brilliant idea of imitating Philip’s clumsy run. Other boys saw it and began to laugh;[...]and they ran round Philip, limping grotesquely,[...]one

of them tripped Philip up and he fell, heavily as he always fell, and he cut his knee. [...]. The game was forgotten in the entertainment of Philip's deformity.<sup>22</sup>

This passage reveals the assumptions held by the able-bodied people about the disabled ones such as eccentricity and oddity. Furthermore, the author sheds light on the marginalization and the estrangement of Philip among his peers who do not only perceive him as an "other" but also take advantage of his deformity by having fun and entertaining themselves.

Moreover, in this scene, Philip is portrayed as a weak and vulnerable child who feels helpless vis-à-vis the situation that he faces. Indeed, he cannot defend himself because of his deformity that prevents him from moving quickly or even running away. Besides, Philip is lonely and alienated; no one supports him and stands by his side because he is different. In other words, he is found alone against the majority that he cannot confront and ends up succumbing to their taunting. In this respect, a report entitled "Violence against Children with Disabilities" declares:

Children with disabilities can fall victim to violence in different settings, including schools, at home, or in institutions. Compared with adults, all children are in a situation of vulnerability, due to their stage of development, limited legal capacity and dependence on parents or other caretakers. This situation is exacerbated when a child has impairment.<sup>23</sup>

In this case, Philip is in need of constant protection and security more than normal children. As a vulnerable child, he is constantly dependent on others to help him and rescue him from evil treatment.

Similarly, Septimus endures social exclusion and oppression as a result of his mental disability. According to Tom Shakespeare, disabled people suffer more of the oppression and the ill treatment they receive in society than of the impairment itself. He states: "The problem disabled people face is the result of social oppression and exclusion, not their individual deficit."<sup>24</sup> Before the war, Septimus used to be a normal and conscious person, and a socially respected individual. He was a "poet"<sup>25</sup> and a well-educated man who acquired knowledge

and admired art. He was “devouring [William] Shakespeare, Darwin, The history of civilization, and Bernard Shaw”<sup>26</sup>, but now that he becomes an “invalid”<sup>27</sup> person as Tom Shakespeare calls it, his status shifted to a denigrated and an isolated man who experiences low self-esteem which also Tom Shakespeare considers as a significant problem that people with disabilities face. He notes: “lack of self-esteem and self-confidence is a major obstacle to disabled people participating in society.”<sup>28</sup> Indeed, disability is perceived as a disqualification and a marker of stigma and inferiority. Thus, people with corporeal differences are likely to have low self-esteem that prevents them from interacting with others and being included in society.

Furthermore, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf provides us with flashbacks or episodes of Septimus’ life when he was a non-disabled person in order to emphasize the difference between being a normal individual and a disabled one and the hardships that disability implies. Indeed, before the war, he was portrayed as a “gentle”<sup>29</sup>, “serious”<sup>30</sup> and a “clever”<sup>31</sup> man. In addition, he was so strong and brave that he was “one of the first to volunteer”<sup>32</sup> in WWI; “he went to France to save England,”<sup>33</sup> and there “he served with the great distinction”<sup>34</sup> and had “an exceptionally brilliant career”<sup>35</sup>. In other words, Septimus was not only integrated in society as any other normal individual, but he was also a successful and an independent man who had many goals in life. However, as soon as Septimus has been diagnosed with a psychological disability or a mental disorder, he lost any interest in life and became emotionally numb. He dives into isolation and finds himself alone in the midst of the crowd. Woolf reports: “he looked at people outside, happy they seemed, collecting in the middle of the street, shouting, laughing, and squabbling over nothing. But he could not taste, he could not feel”<sup>36</sup>. In fact, this passage highlights the estrangement and the alienation of Septimus. It indicates that he does no longer belong to and fit in society. Philip and Septimus

are both portrayed as “deviant” and “other” who struggle to integrate and fit in their communities.

In *Narrative Prosthesis*, Mitchell and Synder examine the issue of disability in a critical rather than a cultural way. They start with bringing into evidence examples about the representation of disability in literature, and then they assume that those literary portrayals of this category of people emphasize the cultural devaluation of individuals with physical and cognitive differences. In fact, it is worth to mention that most of disability authors tend to picture this phenomenon from a social lens that implies the marginalization and the exclusion of disabled individuals. In other words, they try to reflect the issue of disability in relation to society and culture instead of an individual experience. The two authors then write:

Our hypothesis in *Narrative Prosthesis* is a paradoxical one: disabled people’s social invisibility has occurred in the wake of their perpetual circulation throughout history, this matter is not simply a matter of stereotypes or “bad object”, to borrow Naomi Schor’s phrase. Rather, the interpretation of representations of disability strikes at the very core of cultural definitions and values.<sup>37</sup>

They add:

In spite of research that saw most artistic and popular representations of disability as a debilitating to the social advance of disabled people, the analysis of negative images helped to support the idea that disability was socially constructed.<sup>38</sup>

These two quotes draw attention to the indirect or unintentional contribution of literature in the negative portrayal of disability. In other words, in their attempt to represent disability in their writings, some authors have focused on stereotypes and mythical assumptions spread in society about the physically or mentally impaired people. These stereotypes then report that disabled individuals are passive, helpless, eccentric, inferior, rejected, oppressed, discriminated and excluded from the mainstream community.

In the light of the above claims, Maugham at the beginning of his novel depicts Philip as subject to oppression and rejection. This discriminatory attitude of oppression toward him is not limited to physical violence and bullying, but it also appears in the verbal offences and

intimidations that he receives from his classmates and teachers. To exemplify, when Philip's classmates called him "cripple,"<sup>39</sup> "he stood silent and flushed. He felt that they looked at him with contempt."<sup>40</sup> The headmaster of his school also called him so and said that he cannot hit a cripple<sup>41</sup> because he is weak, helpless and inspires pity. As a consequence, Philip grows convinced that he is negatively different and inferior. In turn, this feeling of inferiority and stigma weighs on his psyche and shapes his personality as a young man. Indeed, Philip has become very sensitive because of his disability. The author states: "he passed from the innocence of childhood to bitter consciousness of himself by the ridicule which his club-foot had excited"<sup>42</sup>. This indicates that his infliction and torments did never stop throughout time; they intensified and got a more serious effect on him. Indeed "he thought miserably about his deformity"<sup>43</sup> and hated to refer to it.

Moreover, when Philip enters the medical school where he is studying and working as an assistant at the out-patient clinic, he experiences several scenes of humiliation. The narrator states: "he had seen men at the hospital imitate his walk, not before him as they used to do at school, but when he was not looking."<sup>44</sup> Besides, when "one day a case came up of a boy with club-foot"<sup>45</sup> and Philip was charged to examine it, he felt embarrassed and "he flushed" because he identified in this case. The child with a club-foot was rather indifferent and was not likely to feel stigmatized. Thus, Philip "could not understand why the boy felt none of the humiliation which always oppressed himself."<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, when one of his fellows asked him to take off his socks, he "felt a shudder pass through him. He had an impulse to tell the surgeon to go to hell."<sup>47</sup> In these situations, Philip feels embarrassed and thinks of himself as an inferior person.

Accordingly, Philip gets offended when people refer to his deformity because he thinks that they look at him with contempt and repulsion. The narrator notes: "[...] his club-foot seemed to excuse his not being like the rest"<sup>48</sup>. In fact, through portraying Philip as

discriminated and humiliated, Maugham is likely to affirm the “otherness” of disabled people. In other words, Philip applies to the same cultural prejudices that indicate social exclusion and oppression. Disabled people are condemned by their deficits and doomed to a perpetual feeling of stigma and estrangement. Lerita Coleman Brown assumes that “stigmatization or feeling stigmatized is a consequence of social comparison. For this reason stigma represents a continuum undesired differences.”<sup>49</sup> In this sense, the author tries to reflect Philip’s oddity in opposition to the other people conforming to the norm. In short, his physical difference constitutes his deviance and otherness.

Similarly, the protagonist of *Mrs. Dalloway* is ranked to the same category of “other” because of his disability. The depiction of his experience is fraught with prejudices related to isolation, weakness and oppression. In fact, as long as Septimus is no longer the same person he used to be, his integration and inclusion to society shifts to a permanent estrangement and alienation. His wife is the only person to remain by his side. Nevertheless, she is too tired of his behavior and “could no longer stand it”<sup>50</sup>. Therefore, Septimus has become “quite alone, condemned and deserted as those who are about to die alone.”<sup>51</sup>

In addition, now that he has become disabled, he is described as helpless and weak. Woolf states: “He was too weak; he could scarcely raise his hand.”<sup>52</sup> In this case, Septimus’s disability does not only affect his sanity but also his physical ability. Therefore, he can no longer manage even the most simple and routine tasks without his wife’s help. The author adds: “[...] he had surrendered; now other people must help him. People must be sent for.”<sup>53</sup> Indeed, Lucrezia sends for a doctor namely Holmes in order to examine her husband’s case. This latter said that “there is nothing the matter with him”<sup>54</sup>, but Septimus hallucinates; he says queer and terrible things like that “he had committed a crime”<sup>55</sup>; “he had threatened to kill himself.”<sup>56</sup> She takes him to another doctor, namely Bradshaw, who in his turn tells her that “her husband was seriously ill”<sup>57</sup> and insists on the necessity of confining him in an

asylum. As a matter of fact, Woolf reflects another stereotype consisting in the fact that people diagnosed with mental disability must be segregated and confined in institutions especially targeted for this category to isolate them as far as they are seen as a danger or a threat to society.

Moreover, Holmes and Bradshaw incarnate a form of social oppression and a psychological pressure on Septimus. He says “once you fall, human nature is on you. Holmes and Bradshaw are on you.”<sup>58</sup> In this context, Tom Shakespeare points out:

Disabled people are distinguished from non-disabled people. Disabled people are an oppressed group, and often non-disabled and organizations- such as professionals and charities are the cause or contributors to that oppression.<sup>59</sup>

The above citation reflects that “professionals” such as Holmes and Bradshaw contribute to the segregation and incarceration of disabled individuals by imposing institutionalization as the only solution for people with mental impairments. Liat Ben-Moshe argues that confinement most of the time deteriorates the health condition of the patients. She notes: “conditions of confinement cause further mental deterioration in prisoners entering the system with diagnosis of “mental retardation” or intellectual disabilities.”<sup>60</sup> In addition, Septimus repudiates the idea of being institutionalized; he longs for “freedom”<sup>61</sup> and communication. He says: “communication is health; communication is happiness”<sup>62</sup>, but it seems that society in general, and the two doctors in particular, are not likely to understand him. Indeed, Holmes appears to be dismissive; he underestimates Septimus’ condition, whereas Bradshaw overexaggerates it when he immediately stuck for the asylum option without having much knowledge about shell-shock. Septimus ends up committing suicide when Holmes shows up at his flat. He was afraid that this latter was there to take him to the institution; he throws himself from the window and dies. The narrator reports: “he did not wish to die. Life was good. The sun hot. Only human beings.”<sup>63</sup> This underscores that human beings represent a form of oppression to disabled people. At the end when Septimus throws himself and dies,

Holmes thought of him as “a coward,”<sup>64</sup> and this reflects the social judgment toward the mentally impaired individuals which implies that they are cowards and tend to commit suicide to escape their disabilities.

Mitchell and Synder claim that through using disability as a story plot and a device of characterization, literature tends to embody the cultural assumptions assigned to disabled individuals and which contribute to the establishment of their collective devaluated identity.

They point out:

While disability’s troubling presence provides literary works with the potency of unsettling cultural commentary, disabled people have been historically refused a parallel power within their social institutions, in other words, while literature often relies on disability’s transgressive potential, disabled people have been sequestered, excluded, exploited, and obliterated on the very basis of which their literary representation often relies.<sup>65</sup>

In the same context they add:

The restrictive elements of stories about disability helped an uncompromising public belief in the limited options for people with disabilities: disabled characters abound, but the way in which they are portrayed and the development of narrative around them is relentlessly negative.<sup>66</sup>

The two above quotes epitomize the underlying claims in *Narrative Prosthesis*. In fact, the two authors hold that the role of literature in portraying the reality of disability did not reach its threshold or its ultimate objective; it is in one way or another disappointing because it rather devalues the image or the status of the disabled people by representing them as “others”. We cannot deny that the objective of literature is to mirror culture and chronicle historical realities, but in this case it is denigrating the experience of disability and promoting the social negative image about it. Mitchell and Synder state: “there was a direct correlation, between debasing character portraits and demeaning cultural attitudes toward people with disabilities”<sup>67</sup> and that “the restrictive elements of stories about disability helped create an uncompromising public belief in the limited options for people with disabilities.”<sup>68</sup> This is to

say that stories about disability do not only depict this latter in relation to cultural beliefs and stereotypes but they sometimes contribute in spreading and maintaining these stereotypes.

In the recent field of Disability Studies, scholars endeavor to analyze the issue of disability as an individual experience and a medical impairment rather than a social oppressed category. The authors of *Narrative Prosthesis* claim that: “disability studies challenges the common ascription of inferior lives to persons with physical or cognitive differences”<sup>69</sup> and that “social realist scholarship seeks to decrease the kinds of alienation that pervade social views of disabled people”<sup>70</sup> Therefore, “social realism calls for more realistic representations.”<sup>71</sup> In other words, disability scholars incite disability authors to portray the experience of disabled individuals in a more accurate and less discriminatory way which disassociates these people from stigma and denigration. This does not necessarily entail a positive or a heroic image about the disabled characters but rather a realistic one that emphasizes their disability in a medical context.

To conclude, this chapter underscores two main points which are: the prominence of disability in literary discourses more specifically in *Of Human Bondage* and *Mrs. Dalloway* as a story plot and a means of characterization and the stereotype-based representation of disabled people with providing examples from the two works under scrutiny. In fact, throughout this chapter we have seen the common characteristics between the two disabled characters Philip and Septimus in terms of “otherness”, and I have also made an analogy between Maugham and Woolf in relation to their representation of disability where I have deduced that their depictions of the two disabled characters is in one way or another fraught with culturally-based beliefs that put persons with corporeal differences in the vein of inferiority and otherness. The following chapter would rather contrast the two narratives and center upon the differences between the two characters, hence the differences between the two authors’ representations.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse*, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Clare Barker and Stuart Murray, “From Richard III to Captain Ahab: what literature reveals about how we treat disabilities.” *The Guardian*, January 12, 2018, accessed April 11, 2019, url: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/jan/12/disability-literature-point-of-view>.

<sup>3</sup> David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Maugham, *Of Human Bondage*, 9.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, 10.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Marlene Ritchie, B.S, M.N, “Children Born with Disabilities: How Families Respond,” *Child Research Net*, May 10, 2013, accessed April 12, 2019, url: [https://www.childresearch.net/papers/rights/2013\\_01.html](https://www.childresearch.net/papers/rights/2013_01.html)

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 49.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, 62.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid, 49.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, 53.

<sup>14</sup>Miles Beauchamp, Wendy V. Chang, Alijandra Mojilner, “Who Defines Disability,” in *Disabled Literature: A Critical Examination of the Portrayal of Individuals with Disabilities in Selected Works of Modern and Contemporary American Literature*, ed. S. Zakinova and H. Malla ( Florida: Brown Walker Press, 2015), 23.

<sup>15</sup>Denise Thomson et al., *Community attitudes to people with disability: scoping project* (Sydney: University of New South Wales, 2011), 2.

<sup>16</sup>Rene Momene, “Negative Attitudes and Stereotypes Linked To Disability.” *Atlas Corps*, December 18, 2015, accessed April 15, 2019, url: <https://www.AtlasCorps/NegativeStereotypesAndAttitudesLinkedToDisability1511876>.

<sup>17</sup> Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 67.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>19</sup> David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 17.

<sup>20</sup> Maugham, *Of Human Bondage*, 43.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Violence against children with disabilities: legislation, policies and programs in the EU* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2015), 8.

<sup>24</sup> Tom Shakespeare, "The Social Model of Disability," 217.

<sup>25</sup> Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 63.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Tom Shakespeare, "The Social Model of Disability," 217.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 66.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>37</sup> David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 52.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>39</sup> Maugham, *Of Human Bondage*, 48.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid, 50.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid, 481.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid, 410.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid, 411.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Lerita M. Coleman Brown, *Stigma: An Enigma Demystified*, 148.

<sup>50</sup>Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 49.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid, 68.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid, 67

<sup>54</sup>Ibid, 71.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>ibid.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid, 72.

<sup>59</sup>Tom Shakespeare, "The Social Model of Disability," 216.

<sup>60</sup>Liat Ben-Mosh, "The Institution Yet to Come: Analyzing Incarceration Through a Disability Lens" in *Disability Studies Reader*, 134.

<sup>61</sup>Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*. 69.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid, 108.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Mitchell and Synder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 08.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid, 19.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid, 18.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid, 19.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid, 2.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid, 22.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid, 21.

## **Chapter Two: Disability, Its Varieties and the Differences between Philip Carey and Septimus Warren Smith**

The previous chapter has dealt with the similarities or the characteristics that associate the two protagonists in terms of disability, their negative portrayal as well as the discriminatory treatment and attitudes they encounter in society. In fact, these historically accumulated attitudes and assumptions about disabled people tend to constitute a deterministic collective identity for this social category

This second chapter aims to spotlight and bring out the differences that lie in the two selected novels with reference to the two main characters, namely Philip Carey, the protagonist of *Of Human Bondage*, and Septimus Warren Smith, the second protagonist of *Mrs. Dalloway*. Furthermore, through this chapter, I will try to extract from the two narratives the aspects in which Philip and Septimus seem to be different. In other words, after I have approached the two novels from an analogical perspective, I will also give room in this chapter to the differences that surface throughout the two selected books in order to demonstrate the way in which disability varies from one person to another –from one character to another in this case- along with their different reactions and behaviors vis-à-vis their disabilities. In this respect, Mitchell and Synder argue:

There have also been hierarchies within our own communities where some disabilities are viewed as less assimilable than others. For instance, individuals with physical disabilities have historically disassociated themselves from those who have intellectual disabilities.<sup>1</sup>

Drawing on their theory of *Narrative Prosthesis*, I will try to explain this quote through making reference to Philip and Septimus in order to reflect their different characteristics in relation to their respective physical and intellectual impairments. Before sticking to the core concern of this chapter, it is important to check the meaning and the

understanding of disability in the mainstream culture by providing some definitions and reviewing what critics have already said concerning this subject matter.

For one thing, Momm and Greiecker claim:

People seem to know what a disabled person is and are certain that they are able to identify an individual as disabled, either because the disability is visible or because they are aware of a specific medical condition that lends itself to be called disability. However, what precisely the term *disability* means is less easy to determine.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, though it seems that disability is a simple notion which is usually understood in opposition to a healthy body or a full proportion, its meaning transcends this traditional definition because of the fact that the latter may be defined and understood from different perspectives with regard to different contexts and different fields of inquiry. However, the same authors of the above citation strive to define a disabled body using these simple words: “[...] a disabled person would be someone whose ability to perform in one or several key areas—such as communication, mobility, dexterity and speed—is affected.”<sup>3</sup> They add: “This definition of disability still stays within the tradition of regarding disability as a deviation from the norm and ignores all other individual and societal factors that together constitute the phenomenon of disability.”<sup>4</sup>

This citation indicates that the definition of disability is not limited to the traditional belief that regards it as a simple deviance from the norm, but it is also influenced by other medical, political, social factors that make of it a complex phenomenon.

In addition, Tom Shakespeare claims that: “Impairment is distinguished from disability. The former is individual and private; the latter is structural and public.”<sup>5</sup> From this quote, one can deduce that “impairment” is the simple version of disability, while “disability” in its turn is a conceptualized and theorized notion that is used according to different contexts. Other Disability Studies scholars and critics from social sciences and other fields of research

came to classify disability into different models and types. Thus its definition becomes more complex and relative. In this regard, Martina Vuk notes:

Definitions of disability depend on whether disability is approached from the realm of biomedical or social sciences. Numerous definitions of disability have been proposed in an academic framework within the last fifty years stemming from medical through to a social definition.[...] disability is considered as an umbrella term that covers impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. Disability is thus not just a health problem; it is a complex phenomenon reflecting the interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives.<sup>6</sup>

In this statement, Vuk emphasizes two prominent models making the definition of disability shift from one model to another. These are: the “biomedical” and the “social” models. Indeed, the former approaches disability as impairment or a defect which needs a medical intervention to treat it or heal it, whereas the latter regards it as a deviation from the norm, and a disfavored difference or a mark of inferiority.

From the above citations and claims, it is obvious that the meaning of disability is not stable but rather dynamic since it shifts from one model to another or from one context to another. In fact, this paper, mainly the first chapter, is rather concerned with the social model that perceives disability as a social category and relates its connotation to negative images and stereotypes. After providing some definitions of disability, I will devote this second chapter to emphasize its varieties as shown in the two novels.

As far as disability is concerned, Philip Carey and Septimus Warren Smith, as they are already introduced in the previous chapter, are two disabled characters who respectively suffer from a physical deformity and a mental deficit, namely Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or Shell shock. In spite of the fact that they share the same status of the “other” as a result of their corporeal differences, Philip and Septimus' conditions actually differ in the sense that the former has a physical disability while the latter undergoes a mental one. In addition, Philip is born with this deformity and grows up with the feeling of being different, whereas Septimus is affected by a shell shock at the age of nearly 30 when he is back from the war.

Consequently, the former learns how to integrate society and finally embraces his disability, while the latter is not likely to adjust to his current situation. Thus, he escapes it through committing suicide.

First of all, Philip's disability consists of a physical deformity called "club-foot" which is "characterized by abnormal bone formation in the foot."<sup>7</sup> In fact, this latter generally appears at birth and causes the affected persons to limp for the rest of their lives since it is rarely healed. Besides, it is something visible that persons like Philip cannot conceal and other people can easily see. In this sense, Lerita Brown argues:

Physical abnormalities for example, are maybe the most severely stigmatized differences because they are physically salient, represent some deficiency or distortion in the bodily form, and in most cases are unalterable.<sup>8</sup>

This quote demonstrates that unlike cognitive and psychological illnesses which are not easily recognizable, physical deficits and deformities are so visible and surfaced on the body that they draw attention and make the disabled individuals most of the time stigmatized and embarrassed by other's gazes and attitudes.

Indeed, Philip is very sensitive when it comes to his deformity. The author reports that: "the humiliation he suffered when first he went to school caused in him a shrinking from his fellows which he could never entirely overcome; he remained shy and silent."<sup>10a</sup> In short, this corporeal difference heavily influences his personality and shapes his character. Moreover, even as an adult, he cannot get rid of his sensitivity and sentiment of inferiority especially when his disability is noticed or people refer to it. To use the authors' words: "[...] he was always shy of new surroundings,"<sup>10b</sup> and "the fact remained that he was helpless. He felt just as he had felt sometimes in the hands of a bigger boy at school. He struggled against the superior strength till his own strength was gone, [...] he felt just that same weakness now."<sup>11</sup>

Accordingly, the author emphasizes the fact that Philip's physical deformity engenders a sentiment of weakness and low self-esteem in him. However, this latter does in no way prevent him from leading a normal life and performing basic and routine tasks such as communicating, studying, working, and getting involved in social activities.

In Contrast to Philip, Septimus suffers from a mental impairment consisting in a Post Traumatic Stress Disorder which according to Roxanne Dryden-Edwards "usually results from prolonged exposure to traumatic event(s), and long-lasting problems that affect many aspects of emotional and social functioning."<sup>12</sup> She notes:

Symptoms of C-PTSD include problems regulating feelings, dissociation, or depersonalization, persistent depressive feelings, seeing the perpetrator of trauma as all powerful, preoccupation with the perpetrator, and a severe change in what gives the sufferer meaning.<sup>13</sup>

This citation illustrates the outcomes of PTSD and the functional problems that sufferers of this disorder endure.

Indeed, Septimus has become emotionally numb as the narrator states: "He looked at people outside; happy they seemed, collecting in the middle of the street, shouting, laughing, squabbling over nothing. But he could not taste, he could feel nothing."<sup>14</sup> In fact, Septimus' numbness results from the wicked experience of the war and the loss of his friend Evans. Woolf states: "when Evans was killed, just before the armistice in Italy, Septimus, far from showing any emotion or recognition that here was the end of a friendship, congratulated himself upon feeling very little and very reasonable."<sup>15</sup> Moreover, Septimus seems to be so bewildered and disillusioned that he loses any interest in life. Though he is "still under thirty"<sup>16</sup> and "had won a promotion,"<sup>17</sup> he is no longer able to feel happy or enjoy life. Woolf reports that he "was bound to survive,"<sup>18</sup> as if life was rather a punishment or a source of mental suffering and torments for him.

In addition, Septimus' mental illness carries out many undesirable outcomes and negative impacts on his individual, social and conjugal life. In fact, he copes with the real world while he is absorbed by imagination and sunk in his hallucination related to the war. Furthermore, he no longer cares about his wife Lucrezia, who thinks of him as selfish when he did not show empathy to her own suffering. The narrator writes: "his wife was crying and he felt nothing; only each time she sobbed in this profound, this silent, this hopeless way, he descended another step in the pit."<sup>19</sup> Besides, when Lucrezia "had taken off her wedding ring"<sup>20</sup> he thought that "their marriage was over"<sup>21</sup> and that "he was free"<sup>22</sup>. In this way, Septimus' disability ruins his life and destroys his relationships with other people most notably his wife. "A world report on disability" states that: "People who experience mental health conditions or intellectual impairment appear to be more disadvantaged in many settings than those who experience physical or sensory impairments."<sup>23</sup> Accordingly, it seems that Septimus' case is more serious than Philip's one since it does not only alienate him and confine him in his imaginary world but also leads him to give up his career, his social life and forsake every activity and task he used to do before he gets mentally impaired like reading and writing poetry.

As it is already stated, Philip's physical disability impacts on his character and his psychological state in the sense that it makes him feel different and inferior compared to other people around him. However, this does not impact on his physical as well as cognitive skills and his ability to earn his living and manage his well-being. In contrast, Septimus' disability does not only affect his mental faculties but also his physical ability so much so that he becomes passive and dependent on his wife. The latter looks after him and takes care of him because "he was too weak"<sup>24</sup> and helpless like a small child in constant need of his mother's presence and care. Tom Shakespeare assumes that: "Physical and sensory impairments are in many senses the easiest to accommodate."<sup>25</sup> Indeed, Philip's deformity is not as serious and

complicated as Septimus' mental disorder which disturbs his thinking and destabilizes his psychological state in a way that he is no longer able to control himself and focus on his life.

As far as mental and physical disabilities are concerned, Mitchell and Synder assume that:

While most of the work in the humanities to date has centered upon physical disability as its grounding object of study, one of the major new areas of research in disability studies will need to be that of cognitive disabilities. Although cognitive disabilities have surfaced in the current research, only a few studies take the representation of psychological differences as their primary concern.<sup>26</sup>

In this quote, the two scholars and researchers claim that cognitive disability is not a recent phenomenon and it existed side by side with the physical one. However, the latter is prevalent in the field of humanities and is represented in numerous works, while less attention and importance was devoted to the former one. Thus, they emphasize the seriousness of cognitive disabilities and the necessity of researching more on this matter and giving more importance and significance to this concern.

Moreover, while Philip was born with a club-foot, Septimus' disability is developmental. In other words, he was physically and cognitively sane until the age of nearly 30 when he was affected by a shell shock as a result of the war. Indeed, Philip grows up aware of his deformity or his physical difference. At school, everyone laughs at him and humiliates him when he limps. Thus, he distances himself from his peers and learns to resist to their mockeries and their taunting. But as time goes by, he learns to resist to other's ill-treatment and bear their gazes of discrimination. The author notes: "As time went on Philip's deformity ceased to interest. It was accepted like one boy's red hair and another's unreasonable corpulence. But meanwhile he had grown horribly sensitive."<sup>27</sup> In other words, Philip develops a sentiment of being stigmatized and marginalized by his surrounding, so he becomes a sensitive and shy boy. As time passes by, he gets accustomed to people's first

impression and reaction toward his disability; he learns to console his torments and to live with the feeling of being socially stigmatized and marginalized. Lerita Brown argues:

There are some persons who accept their devalued status as legitimate. Attempting to pass and derogating others like themselves are two ways in which stigmatized people effectively accept the society's negative perceptions of their stigma.<sup>28</sup>

She adds: "Many stigmatized people regain their identity through redefining normality and realizing that it is acceptable to be who they really are."<sup>29</sup>

In the light of these quotes, Philip is seen as belonging to this category of disabled or stigmatized people who embrace their disabilities and learn to adjust to them.

In contrast, things are quite different in the case of Septimus since he is a newly disabled person who has never been introduced to such a situation and has never experienced the fact of being different and estranged. In fact, things were quite perfect for him as he was a healthy and strong man who used his strength to join the WWI and fight for the sake of his country. In addition to being physically strong, Septimus was a gifted man who enjoyed poetry and idealized love and freedom. In short, he tended to look at life from an idealistic angle thinking that it is beautiful and worth living. The narrator compares him to a flower that blossoms in the garden. She writes:

[...] what could the most observant of friends have said except what a gardener says when he opens the conservatory door in the morning and finds a new plant: -it has flowered; flowered from vanity, ambition, idealism, passion, loneliness, courage".<sup>30</sup>

This passage metaphorically describes the vivacity of Septimus which makes him more tenacious to life and more ambitious to realize great things. However, the effect of the war interrupts his dreams and takes off his sanity and vivacity. The war is a turning point in Septimus' life because of the amount of trauma and disillusionment that it caused in him and the dramatic shift that has turned his life into a mess and a perpetual struggle against illness. In other words, the feeling of being a disabled person, hence an inferior individual, is

something new that Septimus is not likely to resist and to be adjusted to. In this sense, Lerita Brown notes:

It is clear, especially from accounts of those who move from a non-stigmatized to a stigmatized role that stigmatization is difficult to resist if everyone begins to reinforce the inferior status with their behavior.<sup>31</sup>

Accordingly, Brown demonstrates that people who used to be normal and enjoyed a high and respectable status in society (non-stigmatized) like Septimus find it difficult to reintegrate and face social attitudes toward them once they become “stigmatized” or affected by a stigma marker such as disability. Then she adds:

Another detrimental aspect of stigmatization is the practice of treating people, such as the ex-con and ex-mental patient who are attempting to reintegrate themselves into society, as if they still had the stigma.<sup>32</sup>

Following this statement, Brown suggests that the struggle of mentally ill persons is not limited to the hardships and troubles they face during the period of their illness. Even if these persons get out from this state of disability and stigma, they will always struggle and face difficulties to resume their social life, regain their life style and rehabilitate their status. In other words, most of the time, mentally disabled individuals cannot overcome their disabilities because society is always there to remind them of their experience and to label them as “ex-mental patients.”<sup>33</sup>

Finally, the last aspect of disability variation in the two novels appears in the different reactions and behaviors of the two characters vis-a-vis their conditions as two disabled persons. As a matter of fact, Philip Carey, who has got a physical impairment since his birth, tries at first to escape his feeling of estrangement and overcome his torments through occupying himself with other interests that would make him forget about his disability and the fact of being socially rejected and humiliated. In other words, Philip does not succumb to despair and angst, but he rather looks for outlets to escape his sadness and rescue himself from loneliness. For instance, he seeks consolation and relief in prayers and makes recourse to

religion, thinking that God is the only one to help him and cure his deformity. Indeed, he has once read in the Bible that if he had faith in God and asked him whatever he wishes, this latter would realize his wish even if it was a mountain to move. Philip gets lost in his prayers imploring God to appease his psychological suffering through healing his physical deficiency. The narrator states that: “[...] he sank on his knees, buried his face in his hands, and prayed to God with all his might that he would make his club-foot whole.”<sup>34</sup> However, some days later, Philip grows pessimistic about the efficiency of his prayers and gets disappointed by God’s apathy since this latter does not seem to realize his wish and cure his deformity. As a consequence, Philip decides to forsake his worshipping and give up his faith in God. Maugham reports: “[...] he thanked god that he no longer believed in him.”<sup>35</sup> Philip thinks: “After all, it’s not my fault. I can’t force myself to believe. If there is a God after all and he punishes me because I honestly don’t believe in Him I can’t help it.”<sup>36</sup> In this way, he loses the least interest in religion and looks instead for a better option to occupy himself.

Moreover, in an attempt to fill the void or the emptiness that resulted from the lack of interaction with other people, Philip “insensibly formed the most delightful habit in the world, the habit of reading.”<sup>37</sup> In fact, he is used to read all sorts of books that he finds in his uncle’s library. One day when he was reading *The Thousand Nights and a Night*, “he could think of nothing else. He forgot the life about him.”<sup>38</sup> Besides, when he has grown a little bit up, he has become absorbed by the philosophical books which seem to quench his thirst and satisfy his curiosity about humankind and the universe in general. The author writes: “[...] he did not know that thus he was providing himself with a refuge from all the distress of life; he did not know either that he was creating for himself an unreal world which would make the real world of everyday a source of bitter disappointment.”<sup>39</sup> In truth, the real world is harsh and cruel for him as long as he is not welcomed with outstretched arms among his peers, and he is

not allowed to enjoy life and amuse himself as much as they do. Therefore, he decides to escape this harshness through books in which he finally finds refuge and relief.

Subsequently, when Philip becomes a young man, he has already got a considerable knowledge that serves him as an empowerment and an instrument that would subsequently permit him to be an autonomous person and achieve his goals in life. Moreover, when he realizes that he is intrigued by art and wants to be a painter, he does not hesitate to travel to Paris, where he would be able to learn sophisticated art and fulfill his wish of becoming an artist. In Paris, he meets new people whom he interacts with; he is introduced to a new lifestyle characterized by freedom and autonomy. In short, Philip is rather satisfied as he felt free from the bondages of school, religion and society that oppress him, but above all he wants to be free from the bondage of disability that still engrieves and torments him. Thus, he strives to overcome that feeling of embarrassment and awkward shyness that arises in his own person and implies his low self-esteem.

Furthermore, Philip wants to give a definition and a meaning to his existence and have an identity despite the society that marginalizes individuals like him. Instead of getting appropriated to those prejudices and myths about disabled people, he challenges them and endeavors to prove that his deformity is not an impediment for success and well being. In fact, even when he realizes that he is not a talented and promising artist, he decides to return to London and enter the medical school. As a medical student, he was obsessed with learning more medical facts about his impairment in order to know if there was a possibility to cure it; “He had read everything in the library which treated of talipes in its various forms.”<sup>40</sup> In addition, he uses his self-control to hide his weakness and sensitivity when other people looked at his deformity with contempt. Maugham states: “But he had trained himself not to show any sign that the reminder wounded him. He had even acquired control over the blushing which in his boyhood had been one of his torments.”<sup>41</sup>

Further, Philip handles his disability with introspection and self-analysis. This is to say that he is aware of his condition and its effect on his psyche. Thus, he expects no comfort and no consolation from the outside, but he rather looks deep down his soul in an attempt to explore his weaknesses and find out an outlet or a way to deal with them himself without inspiring compassion and empathy in others. I cite the author:

He accepted the deformity which had made life so hard for him; he knew that it had warped his character, but now he saw also that by reason of it he had acquired the power of introspection which had given him so much delight.<sup>42</sup>

This passage reflects that Philip makes use of his disability in a positive way which permits him to know more about himself and to acquire a considerable degree of wisdom and self-consciousness.

In addition to his studies and professional career, Philip had different relationships and love affairs with women such as Miss Wilkinson, Mildred, Norah and Sally whom he eventually gets engaged to and settles down with. At the end, Philip does not only get accustomed to his disability, but he also embraces it without looking at it anymore with shame and malaise. In doing so, he finally finds the happiness and the relief he was always looking for and that he missed especially during his childhood.

Contrary to Philip who confronts his disability, Septimus is sunk in his hallucinations and enters a state of paralysis and unconsciousness. The American Psychiatric Association reports:

People with PTSD have intense, disturbing thoughts and feeling related to their experience that last long after the traumatic event has ended. They may relive the events through flashbacks, nightmares; they may feel sadness, fear or anger; and they may feel detached or estranged from other people.<sup>43</sup>

Instead of getting a medical treatment, he refuses to see the Doctors and rejects any contact with other persons apart from his wife. In fact, Septimus does not seem to handle this new experience and adjust to his disability; he does not try to reintegrate society and accept others' help. His life falls apart as a result of this disability. Therefore, he succumbs to despair

and believes that the only outlet to escape his torments and put an end to his suffering is death. As he fails to confront to his disability, Septimus eventually commits suicide by jumping from the window of his flat.

As a matter of fact, Septimus looks unable to rescue himself and get out from this critical situation, because his disability is in one way or another more complicated and new that even the doctors who examined him could not handle it in a right and effective way. The burden of psychological suffering that it bears transcends his ability to resist because it affects the most functional part in his body: his brain. This disorder devastates the fluidity of his thoughts and disturbs his calmness so much, that he cannot focus and confront those phantoms that invade his head and make him think about dreadful things like suicide.

In the light of *Narrative Prosthesis* theory, Mitchell and Synder claim that: “A disability is either left behind or punished for its lack of conformity.”<sup>44</sup> Indeed, in the first case consisting of Philip Carey, disability is “left behind” since this latter challenges all the different barriers that he encounters at the different stages of his life and he finally succeeds to integrate to and fit in society despite his corporeal difference. However, in the second case, Septimus Warren Smith’s disability is “punished” in the sense that this latter commits suicide because of his inability to reintegrate and conform in his community.

The two authors add:

A simple schematic of narrative structure might run thus: first, a deviance or difference is exposed to a reader; second, a narrative consolidates the need for its own existence by calling for an explanation of the deviation's origins and formative consequences; third, the deviance is brought from the periphery of concerns to the center of the story to come; and fourth, the remainder of the story rehabilitates or fixes the deviance in some manner.

This fourth step of the repair of deviance may involve an obliteration of the difference through a “cure”, the rescue of the despised object from social censure, the extermination of the deviant as a purification of the social body, or the revaluation of an alternative mode of being.<sup>45</sup>

This above quote illustrates the variation of disability in literature through mentioning the different ways in which the stories end up in relation to the fate of the disabled characters. In

fact, authors either “rehabilitate” or “fixe” disability through depicting the defective body as overcoming its stigma and reintegrating to society, or maintain and hold those stereotypes of intrusion and social exclusion through “exterminating” the deviant body suggesting that it cannot integrate to a community that rejects it and denies it the right of full inclusion and participation in the social life.

Accordingly, Maugham seems to belong to the first category of authors who rehabilitate disability, whereas Woolf is likely to identify in the second category which “punishes disability for its lack of conformity.” In fact, though Maugham tends to portray Philip as a deviant and a stigmatized person, his way of ending the story or his suggestion that Philip embraces his disability and integrates his community indicates that the author is rather rehabilitating disability. In contrast, Woolf suggests that it is difficult for people like Septimus to recover from their mental illness and reintegrate into society. By making Septimus commit suicide, she maintains that the fate of mentally disabled individuals is either institution or suicide.

In sum, this chapter treats the theme of disability and its “variations” with reference to the two novels that provide us with outstanding examples of difference and divergence between the two protagonists, Philip Carey and Septimus Warren Smith. Although they are both represented from the same lens of disability and otherness, their experiences differ or diverge in one way or another, and their fate in relation to their disabilities is totally different since the former chooses to fight and challenge society’s views and attitudes of discrimination toward him. Thus, he succeeds to integrate and belong, while the latter is not likely to overcome his disability or accept it. Thus, he finally succumbs and commits suicide.

## **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup>Mitchell and Synder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 4.

<sup>2</sup>“Disability: Concepts and Definitions,” Encyclopedia of Occupational Health and Safety, Last modified July 12, 2011, url: <http://www.iloencyclopaedia.org/part-iii-48230/disability-and-work/disability/disability-concepts-and-definitions>

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Shakespeare, “The Social Model of Disability” in *Disability Studies Reader*, 216.

<sup>6</sup>Martina Vuk, “Vulnerability and Disability: Ethical and Theological Evaluation,” *Disputatio Philosophica* 19, no. 1 (2017): 64, accessed May 14, 2019, url: <https://hrcak.srce.hr/file/283908>

<sup>7</sup>“Clubfoot,” Encyclopedia of Children’s Health, Last modified: November 16, 2004, url: <http://www.healthofchildren.com/C/Clubfoot.html>

<sup>8</sup> Lerita M. Coleman Brown, “Stigma: An Enigma Demystified,” 148.

<sup>9</sup> Maugham, *Of Human Bondage*, 72.

Ibid, 58.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid, 326.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, 286.

<sup>12</sup> Roxanne Dryden-Edwards, “Posttraumatic Stress Disorder PTSD.” *Medicinenet*, June 03, 2013, accessed May 16, 2019, url: [https://www.medicinenet.com/posttraumatic\\_stress\\_disorder/article.htm](https://www.medicinenet.com/posttraumatic_stress_disorder/article.htm).

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 65.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid, 64.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid, 67.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid, 50.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>World Health Organization, *A World Report on Disability* (Geneva: WHO Press, 2011), 5.

<sup>24</sup> Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 68.

<sup>25</sup> Tom Shakespeare, “the social model of disability”, 216.

<sup>26</sup> Mitchell and Synder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 39.

<sup>27</sup> Maugham, *Of Human Bondage*, 46.

<sup>28</sup> Lerita M. Coleman Brown, “Stigma: An Enigma Demystified,” 154.

<sup>29</sup>.Ibid, 155.

<sup>30</sup>Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 63.

<sup>31</sup> Lerita M. Coleman Brown, “Stigma: An Enigma Demystified,” 154.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Maugham, *Of Human Bondage*, 53.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid, 118.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid, 119.

<sup>37</sup> Maugham, *Of Human Bondage*, 37.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid, 410.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid, 255.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid, 604.

<sup>43</sup>“What Is Posttraumatic Stress Disorder?,” American Psychiatric Association, Last modified: January 71, 2019, url: <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/ptsd/what-is-ptsd>.

<sup>44</sup>Michell and Synder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 56.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid, 53.

### **Chapter Three: The Interaction of Disability with Culture and Class**

In the first and second chapter, I have respectively emphasized the common representational characteristics and the differences between the two disabled characters Philip Carrey and Septimus Warren Smith. I have first ascertained that they are in the same vein or associated to the same societal judgment that denigrates them in one way or another. Then, in the second chapter, I have tried to reflect the other characteristics that distinguish them from one another, hence demark the two novels in terms of disability representation. So, in this third and final chapter, I will highlight the “cultural interrogation” of disability in the two selected novels. In other words, I intend to locate the place of disability in culture and examine the impact of this latter on matters of class including the education and employment of the disabled.

As a matter of fact, this issue of disability has always been and remains a recurrent subject matter in different scientific and academic domains including literature and the Humanities. These areas of research then tend to analyze and unfold the perception of disability in culture as well as the status of disabled individuals in their communities. Furthermore, the objective of Disability Studies proves to be twofold: to examine the issue of disability in the light of its literary and cultural representations and to contribute to the rehabilitation and the promotion of disability’s image through shedding light on disability as a personal experience of medical impairments rather than a socially constructed category. In fact, this can be achieved through exposing facts related to the experiences and the struggles of physically or mentally impaired persons, hence suggesting solutions and alternatives in order to free them from social oppression and detach them from the bondage of negative perception and representation that society and culture offer. In this regard, Mitchell and Synder claim that: “nearly every culture views disability as a problem in need of solution, and

this belief establishes one of the major modes of historical address directed toward people with disabilities.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, people with disability have historically been, and are still in many cultures, perceived as a “problem” and treated as intruders. They add:

For all populations physical and cognitive limitations constitute a baseline of cultural undesirability from which they must disassociate themselves in the quest of civil rights and for lessening stigmatization. Consequently, disability has undergone a dual negation- it has been attributed to all “deviant” biologies as a discrediting feature, while also serving the material maker of inferiority itself.<sup>2</sup>

This statement illustrates the cultural repulsion of people with physical and cognitive disabilities. In fact, this state of inferiority and marginalization does not result from disability itself but rather from the cultural beliefs that indicate oddity and abnormality in addition to the will and desire of non-disabled people to distinguish and demark themselves as superior and fit to the variable social situations while disabled individuals are considered to be lacking conformity and skills that would permit them to compete and prove themselves as people worth of esteem and consideration.

Furthermore, disabled individuals may simply stand for a burden and a cultural stigma to their families in particular and to the nation and the government in general. Lennard J. Davis notes:

The emphasis on nation and national fitness obviously plays into the metaphor of the body. If individual citizens are not fit, if they do not fit to the nation, then their national body will not be fit. Of course, such arguments are based on a false idea about the body politics- by that notion hunchbacked citizenry would make a hunchbacked nation.<sup>3</sup>

This excerpt highlights the undesirability of disabled people in their nations because they are likely to impact on the national image and development. Therefore, individuals born with disabilities or become disabled were historically submitted to discrimination, violence and abuse. Furthermore, these individuals were in some cultures executed or at least treated like animals. The most relevant example of oppression and extermination of the disabled people appears during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> C most specifically in Germany when the Nazi regime

called to put all persons with impairments in concentration camps for extermination. The ultimate purpose of this inhuman act was to purify society from disabled individuals and create a healthy and both a physically and intellectually competent population. In contrast, some other cultures or communities sought to rehabilitate this social category through offering help and charity; however this does not seem to remove the cultural stigma and inferiority that was always associated with disability. Mitchell and Synder relate disability to “variegated and sordid series of assumptions and experiences.”<sup>4</sup> This means that disability embodies various bitter experiences. They point out:

The necessity for developing various kinds of cultural accommodations to handle the “problem” of corporeal difference (through charitable organizations, modification of physical architecture, welfare doles, quarantine, genocide, euthanasia programs etc.) situates people with disabilities in a profoundly ambivalent relationship to cultures and stories they inhabit.<sup>5</sup>

This passage then demonstrates that the place of disabled people in culture is an ambivalent one because in spite of the efforts to rehabilitate these individuals their image is still associated to their cultural representation that generally implies oddity and otherness.

As far as culture is concerned, it plays a major role in determining one’s position and place in a hierarchical society. In fact, the cultural values are important criteria upon which people are judged. In other words, these historically accumulated cultural values and beliefs influence the social perception of a given group of people. They can either promote or debase one’s image and indicate if they are superior or inferior. Indeed, the cultural prejudices that circulate in society about people with disabilities reflect their inferiority and social undesirability. As a result, these people are most of the time discriminated and deprived of many privileges. In other terms, people with physical and cognitive limitations tend generally to suffer from social inequality and inaccessibility to services and opportunities including education, employment and health care. Therefore, most of them are said to hold subordinate

positions in society and to belong to the oppressed poor class which struggles to earn a decent living and achieve a state of welfare.

With reference to the two characters in the novels, I will attempt throughout the following paragraphs to demonstrate the way Maugham and Woolf “interrogate” or question the issue of disability in their writings in relation to class, hence strive to reflect its impact on the socioeconomic status of disabled persons through Philip Carey and Septimus Warren Smith. Lennard J. Davis claims: “class again becomes an issue in identity. We must focus on the poor, since by all estimates the majority of people with disability are poor, unemployed, and undereducated.”<sup>6</sup> In the light of this quote, I will provide from the two novels concrete situations that reflect the hard conditions that disabled people undergo in their quest for knowledge and a professional career, hence to develop their status in society.

In fact, as it is previously noted in chapter one, Philip has been subject to discrimination and humiliation at school because of his physical difference. Although he has had full access to education like his non-disabled peers, he has been most of the time intimidated and humiliated by his mates and masters. For instance, when one of the teachers has asked Philip to translate a passage and his tone was fraught with contempt and despise, the later felt so humiliated that he could not focus and answer. The author narrates: “he stood silent, very white, trembling a little, with his head bent down on the book”<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, the teacher has treated him as a “club-footed blockhead.”<sup>8</sup> In truth, the headmaster thinks that he is a “clever”<sup>9</sup> boy. The author reports: “Philip had known the passage perfectly the day before, but now he could remember nothing.”<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, it seems that the discriminatory manner in which the teacher has addressed Philip embarrasses him to the extent that he truly thinks of himself as a “blockhead” and doubts his intelligence and skills. In fact, the teacher’s attitude may be explained in the light of the stereotype that associates disability with “debility”. This stereotype implies that disabled individuals possess little and limited intellectual capacities.

This prevents them from assimilating information accurately and promptly like a person with a perfect body and intact faculties would do.

As a result of oppression and humiliation, Philip has loathed school and lost interest in studies. Maugham reports: “he hated school now with all his heart, and having lost his ambition, cared nothing whether he did ill or well.”<sup>11</sup> In addition, his exclusion from participation in social and intellectual activities at school and the lack of companionship has reduced his enthusiasm to attend the classes. The author notes: “his deformity, withdrawing him from games, acquired for him an insignificance for which he was grateful. He was not popular and he was very lonely.”<sup>12</sup> In this context, Christina Bialka argues:

All students need to feel included in order to succeed in college. But when a student has a disability, inclusion can be more difficult to achieve. One study shows students with disabilities participate in fewer extracurricular activities, like clubs or on-campus events, than non-disabled peers. This is due to a lack of social inclusion.<sup>13</sup>

This quote underscores the importance of inclusion and participation of the disabled persons<sup>2</sup> at school in order to get involved in the educational and intellectual atmosphere to acquire considerable knowledge and skills that would permit them later on to compete and occupy important positions in society. Otherwise, when disabled students are excluded from these activities, their motivation weakens and their skills become duller. Therefore, it is assumed that students with impairments are more likely to drop from school than their non-disabled peers.

Moreover, education constitutes what Pierre Bourdieu calls a “cultural capital” since individuals can invest their acquired knowledge and intellectual skills in a way that enables them to guarantee their welfare and to be ranked among the well-educated and privileged social class. In other words, the education level affects the social class in a way that it determines the status of individuals and decides whether they are going to be included or excluded in the social context and to what class they would belong. The World Health

Organization states that “for children with disabilities, as for all children, education is a vital in itself but also instrumental for participating in employment and other social activities.”<sup>14</sup> However, “many children and adults with disabilities have historically been excluded from mainstream education opportunities.”<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, “children with disabilities are less likely to start school and have lower rates of staying and being promoted at school.”<sup>16</sup> In fact, surveys indicate that most of disabled individuals, especially those born with disabilities or become affected at an early age, are undereducated because of their physical or cognitive limitations and the social barriers that prevent them from attending school or compel them to leave it at an early stage. Thus, these individuals are most of the time said to belong to the undereducated and disfranchised constituency of society because their opportunities to occupy important and qualified professions are very low, and their physical abilities are also so limited that they cannot perform hard works.

To exemplify, when Philip was still a student at Tercanbury, the headmaster has advised him to work hard at school in order to be an educated person and hold a suitable occupation that would permit him to be rich or at least lead a financially comfortable life when he becomes an adult. The headmaster said: “I’m afraid your choice of profession will be rather limited. You naturally couldn’t go in for anything that required physical activity.”<sup>17</sup> Therefore, education is a very important element that determines the social class of every individual, and the exclusion of disabled people from this opportunity engenders negative outcomes including social oppression and economic hardships. In this sense, the WHO claims: “excluding children with disabilities from educational and employment opportunities have high social and economic costs. For example, adults with disabilities tend to be poorer than those without disabilities.”<sup>18</sup> Indeed, disabled individuals are most often associated with poverty, passivity and incompetence.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, before he gets impaired, Septimus is depicted as a well-educated person. He was a very ambitious person who quenches his thirst for knowledge with books. The author describes him as “One of those half-educated, self-educated men whose education is all learnt from books borrowed from public libraries.”<sup>19</sup> Besides, he left his home and went to London in order to be a poet. This indicates that Septimus was enjoying a certain prestigious status; he belongs to the intellectual class of people who admire Shakespeare and seek to follow his path. In short, Septimus’ knowledge and skills speak for his esteem and position in society. However, as soon as he becomes disabled and could not cope with his mental impairment, his significant position does no longer seem to be the same. He is perceived like any other oppressed and marginalized individual or those who do not develop intellectual skills; he is passive and isolated. In this sense, Septimus’ disability affects his status as an educated individual and subdues him to an under-privileged and discredited position. Once again, disability implies debility and incompetence.

As far as class is concerned, work or employment is another element influenced by one’s physical and intellectual skills, and influences in its turn, or rather determines one’s position and socio-economic status. As a matter of fact, disabled individuals are more likely to experience poverty and economic marginalization because of their low access to or lack of opportunities for decent jobs. In other words, the discriminatory beliefs about disabled persons that indicate incompetence and unproductivity are the main reasons why most of these individuals are unemployed, or if employed, it is for very little wages.

Accordingly, Maugham endeavors to reflect the barriers that people with impairments encounter in their attempt to be hired and earn a living. Philip could overcome all the forms of oppression and hardships that he met at school; he succeeded in his studies thanks to his perseverance and the fact that his deformity is less serious compared to other disabilities. This is to say that his physical deformity does neither impact on his mental faculties nor his basic

physical movements. In short, Philip's disability does not imply passivity. In this regard, the WHO claims: "enrolment rates also differ according to impairment type, with children with physical impairment generally faring better than those with intellectual or sensory impairments."<sup>20</sup> In other words, people who experience severe disabilities such as blindness, deafness and autism are more vulnerable and more likely to suffer than people like Philip. Therefore, this latter could acquire a considerable intellectual background and develop many skills in different domains including literature, art and medicine. However, it seems that he is not immune from social and economic marginalization. Philip undergoes social inequality as a result of his disability. His uncle told him that his unlucky deformity does not make it easier for him to earn his living.<sup>21a</sup> In fact, at a given stage of his life, Philip experiences serious hardships such as joblessness, homelessness and even famine. I cite the author:

This was the third night he had spent out now. Now and then he sat on the benches in Piccadilly and towards the morning he strolled down to the embankment [...]. He went on this way for several days. He had very little food and began to feel weak and ill, so that he had hardly enough energy to go on looking for the work which seemed desperately hard to find. He was growing used now to the long waiting at the back of a shop on the chance that he would be taken on, and the curt dismissal.<sup>21b</sup>

This excerpt demonstrates the extent to which Philip's disability impacts on his well-being and subdues him to undesirable outcomes. Despite his skills and abilities, his opportunities to employment are so limited. In fact, every time he applies for a job and gets interviewed, the employer would refer to his deformity, as if it was a great impediment for him to perform his work as it should. Thus, he is most of the time denied the chance or the civil right of getting a job. For instance, when Philip applied for a job as a "shop-walker"<sup>22</sup>, the first thing that the employer has noticed was his deformity; he was limping. The latter told him that he was not a bit good to them<sup>23</sup>. The author states: "he looked Philip up and down. He seemed to notice that Philip was in some way different from the men who preceded him."<sup>24</sup> Further, Philip finds himself in the street among other persons who seem to not have a shelter too. The author narrates that once at the shop where Philip was applying for a job, he recognized a man whom

he used to see “lying about the park in the afternoon”<sup>25</sup> and that “he was a homeless himself and passed the night out the doors.”<sup>26</sup> In this way, the author draws a similarity between Philip as a disabled person and the other man who must be a beggar or any other under privileged and unfortunate individual who shares the same class status. The WHO reports:

Misconception about the ability of people with disabilities to perform jobs are an important reason for their continued unemployment and –if employed- for their exclusion from opportunities for promotion in their carriers.<sup>27</sup>

In the light of this citation, Septimus identifies in the second case. This implies that once an individual becomes affected with a physical or a cognitive impairment, they are likely to get fired from their jobs because of the misconceptions about their ability and reliability to perform their jobs in an effective way. As a result, many people who have been diagnosed with a certain illness, or have been impaired in a certain accident at an advanced age are excluded from their occupations. So, their status gets impacted and shifts from higher to lower, or from workers to jobless persons. Moreover, Septimus, as it is previously noted, used to hold a considerable social position; he was a war veteran belonging to the working middle class. In addition, “he might have been a clerk”<sup>28</sup>; Mr Brewer, a church manager at Sibleys and Arrowsmith, used to believe in Septimus’ skills and his ability to become someone successful in some years. The narrator claims:

[...] and thinking highly of Smith’s abilities, and prophesying that he would, in ten or fifteen years, succeed to the leather armchair in the inner room under the skylight with deed-boxes round him, ‘if he keeps his health’ said Mr. Brewer, and that was the danger –he looked weakly.<sup>29</sup>

This states that Septimus was on his way to success being seen as the most qualified to hold this respectable position in the future. However, he looked weak, and his health condition deteriorates continually. Mr. Brewner considers the fact of losing his health as a “danger” believing that this would prevent Septimus from reaching that position and impact on his life including his status and welfare.

Additionally, during the war, Septimus “won promotion”<sup>30</sup>; “at the office, they advanced him to a post of considerable responsibility. They were proud of him; he had won crosses.”<sup>31</sup> In fact, he was on the verge of leading a successful and financially comfortable life with his wife Lucrezia; they would have held a higher and prestigious position in society, hence to belong to the privileged class. However, as fate wants it to be, Septimus’ disability spoils this plan. It does not only destabilize his mental health but also deprives him of privileges and puts him in a delicate financial state that in turn prevents him from having a better medical treatment. The narrator notes: “[...] and if they were rich people, said Dr Holmes, looking ironically round the room, by all means let them go to Harley Street.”<sup>32</sup> As a matter of fact, Harley Street refers to an area situated in London mostly known for its fashionable private clinics and the development of the medical services and instruments. Indeed, Septimus’ case consisting of ‘shell shock’ was new at that time and unknown for many doctors such as Holmes and Bradshaw. The latter is a doctor of the rich; he treats people belonging to the upper class such as Clarissa Dalloway. When he decides to examine Septimus’ case, it was for the sole reason that he was interested in his queer and new illness. Holmes and Bradshaw knew little about this case, and Septimus was in need of more professional doctors. He would have probably gone better if his case had been taken over by more competent doctors at Harley Street who would provide more efficient treatment. However, Septimus could not afford it, for he is poor and jobless. In this regard, Rebecca Vallas assumes that:

People with disabilities are also much more to experience material hardships –such as food insecurity; inability to pay rent, mortgage, and utilities; or not being able to get needed medical care –than people without disabilities at the same income levels.<sup>33</sup>

This passage reflects the economic hardships that disabled people go through and which are a result of inactivity or unemployment. Vallas also considers that disability is both a cause and a consequence of poverty. She writes:

It is a cause because it can lead to job loss and reduced earnings, barriers to education and skills development, significant additional expenses, and many other challenges that can lead to economic hardship. It is also a consequence because poverty can limit access to health care and preventive services, and increases the likelihood that a person lives and works in an environment that may adversely affect health.<sup>34</sup>

From this quote, disability seems to be a vicious circle: it leads to poverty and the latter, in turn, worsens and deteriorates health condition. Indeed, once Septimus has become disabled, he has lost his profession and became poor, and being poor prevents him from getting a better health care. Therefore, disability influences economic class, and economic class influences disability.

In the light of *Narrative Prosthesis* theory, Mitchell and Synder argue that people with disabilities have historically been represented as struggling with class issues. In fact, the cultural misconception of disability situates these individuals with corporeal differences in an underprivileged and oppressed class which suffers from deprivation and poor economic and material conditions. They point out:

Keeping in mind that the perception of disability shifts from one epoch to another, and sometimes within decades and years, we want to argue that the disabled body consistently held down a “privileged” position with respect to the thematic variation on the mind/body split.<sup>35</sup>

This underscores that no matter the historical changes that might have occurred to disability, its status has always been associated with inferiority and oppression.

To sum up, when society is based on capitalist ideals and the Darwinian principle of ‘the survival to the fittest’, people with disabilities are not likely to fit since they have less freedom of choice and less liberty to decide who they want to be or what class they want to belong to, but society or culture instead does. Their corporeal differences and limitations put them under the mercy of those who are privileged with perfect physical formation and intact mental faculties and those who control the means of production and hold high positions and prestigious status in society. In short, the fate of individuals with disabilities is most of the

time bound to the attitudes of those who conform to the norm and enjoy more power and civil rights. Throughout this chapter then, I have tried to explore the implication of “cultural hegemony” and class struggle in relation to disability in the two selected works. From the previous examples about the socio-economic marginalization of the two disabled characters Philip Carey and Septimus Warren Smith, Maugham and Woolf obviously stress the two issues of culture and class and strive to reflect their interaction with disability and the negative outcomes that this interaction engenders at the expense of disabled persons.

## **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup>David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Synder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 47.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid*, 3.

<sup>3</sup>Lennard J. Davis, “*Introduction: Normalcy, Power and Culture*,” in *Disability Studies Reader*, 20.

<sup>4</sup>Mitchell and Synder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 57.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid*, 47.

<sup>6</sup>Lennard J. Davis, “*The End of Identity Politics: On Disability as an Unstable Category*” in *Disability Studies Reader*, 280.

<sup>7</sup>Maugham, *Of Human Bondage*, 65.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid*, 66.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid*, 65.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid*, 79.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid*, 67.

<sup>13</sup>Christa Bialka, “College student with disabilities are too often excluded,” *The Conversation*, November 5, 2018, accessed May 24, 2019, url: <https://theconversation.com/college-students-with-disabilities-are-too-often-excluded-105027>.

<sup>14</sup>World Health Organization, *World Report on Disability* (Geneva: WHO Press, 2011), 205, accessed May 25, 2019, url: [https://www.who.int/disabilities/world\\_report/2011/report.pdf](https://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/report.pdf)

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid, 206.

<sup>17</sup>Maugham, *Of Human Bondage*, 70.

<sup>18</sup> World Health Organization, *World Report on Disability*, 205.

<sup>19</sup>Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 62.

<sup>20</sup> World Health Organization, *World Report on Disability*, 207.

<sup>21a</sup> Maughm, *Of Human Bondage*, 254.

<sup>21b</sup> Ibid, 497.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid, 503.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid, 504

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid, 503.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> World Health Organization, *World Report on Disability*, 240.

<sup>28</sup>Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 62.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid, 63.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid, 64.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid, 65.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid, 69.

<sup>33</sup>Rebecca Vallas, "Disability is a Cause and Consequence of Poverty." *Talk Poverty*, September 19, 2014, accessed May 25, 2019, url: <https://talkpoverty.org/2014/09/18/scholars-activists-poverty-data>.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Mitchell and Synder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 49.

## IV. Conclusion

The dissertation discussed disability and otherness as depicted in Maugham's *Of Human Bondage* (1915) and Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). The two novels emphasize the experiences, of the two disabled protagonists, Philip Carey and Septimus Warren Smith, who struggle to be part of their communities because of their corporal differences. In addition, Maugham and Woolf highlight and interrogate the social norms that reject disabled individuals and consider them as "deviant" and subordinate persons. In my analysis of these two narratives, I attempted to cover the least aspect related to disability. The first chapter is devoted to the similarities between the two literary representations of disability with reference to the two main characters. I deduced that Philip and Septimus are both considered as others and suffer from discrimination and social marginalization. In its turn, the second chapter highlights the differences that lie between the two novels and which distinguish Philip's experience from Septimus' in terms of disability types. As for the third chapter, it addressed the relationship or the interaction of disability with two other social components consisting of culture and class. It demonstrated the extent to which cultural constructs about disabled people impact their position in society.

Maugham and Woolf interrogate the place of disability amongst society and culture. Their literary representations are based on cultural assumptions and stereotypes about disabled individuals in order to reflect the way these individuals are treated in their societies especially at that period of time. Moreover, the two different endings of the novels reflect the different attitudes of the authors toward the fate of disabled people. Maugham is likely to give a chance to his disabled character suggesting that Philip embraces his deformity and gets rid of his stigma to finally integrate in society as any normal individual. In contrast, Woolf

decides to give a tragic ending to her protagonist by making him commit suicide as a result of his inability to conform and reintegrate.

All in all, my analysis of these two narratives comes to a conclusion that disability is mainly represented from a cultural lens that asserts the marginalization and the otherness of individuals with impairments. This marginalization appears through the estrangement of both Philip and Septimus who struggle to identify in their societies as normal individuals with full right of inclusion and participation. This humble study is first of all an attempt to explore and understand the cultural representation of disability in these two books. It is worth to mention that this work is a little contribution to the study of disability. In fact, this subject matter is so broad that it has been devoted a whole field of study called Disability Studies, which is a recent and an independent field of research that seeks to rehabilitate disability.

At the end of this dissertation, I would like to remind that further researches and analyses may be carried out on these narratives in relation to different themes. I suggest that the theme of “disability” can be extended in another paper with applying the theory of “Intersectionality” to examine the “intersection” of disability and class in the same selected works.

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